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RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 7471
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0435

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000582

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR OES/ITC - Eileen Kane

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [TSPL](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [AMGT](#) [APERTH](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY SCIENCE FELLOWS PROGRAM 2009 (Thailand)

REF: (A) State 10843; (B) Thailand 418

1. Embassy Bangkok submits the following request for an Embassy Science Fellow (ESF) with the 2009 program (ref A).

Topic: climate change and adaptation strategies as they relate to water issues.

Preferred time frame is June, July and August 2010 for approximately two months. Length of fellowship is flexible and the time frame could go into September. The intent for time frame is to use the summer transfer season when gap housing is expected to be available. Medical clearance is necessary if the ESF stays for more than 59 days, but Post is open to a shorter stay that would obviate the need for medical clearance if that would be an obstacle.

Additional skills that a successful

Fellow should possess: Thai language skills would be helpful but not required; field research experience would be helpful. Ability to communicate with a wide range of actors from government and NGO community is important.

A security clearance is not required for the work; however, a secret clearance would open more office space opportunities so the applicant is requested to apply for one; if one not granted in time, Post will office the Fellow in non CAA space.

2. Proposal description:

The ESF would contribute to the knowledge base for Thailand and the greater Mekong River Subregion the interplay between climate change predictions, hydrologic consequences and the planning/adaption needs for agriculture, including aquaculture, sanitation, flood prevention, fisheries and drinking water. A wide range of scientists from any of several different disciplines - engineering, hydrology, modeling, fisheries or agronomy could contribute. Post realizes that the topic is too broad for any one scientist to work on all aspects in a short visit. The head of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) Climate Change Office has expressed to ESTHoff an interest in having a science fellow.

BACKGROUND

The RTG, donors, and scientific experts view Thailand, along with the rest of Southeast Asia, as among the most vulnerable to likely climate change (CC) effects (ref B). Water issues figure at the top of impacts. Thailand is at risk from rising sea levels that will damage infrastructure and displace people. Increasing salinization of rivers is expected to negatively affect fisheries; the Mekong River that Thailand shares with four nations has the second most productive and diverse fishery after the Amazon. Coastal changes from sea level rising would bring erosion and destruction of coral reefs and mangrove forests. A large part of Thailand is in the greater Mekong River basin, for which climate change is projected to harm crops. The effects of Himalayan glacial melting on Mekong

water levels needs to be better understood as well.

At a recent conference by the Mekong River Commission on adaptation to CC, scientists appeared to agree on a likely scenario of increased flooding during the rainy season coupled with increased drought during the dry season; also possible is a large population displacement from coastal and riparian areas (including Bangkok) due to rising water levels.

Thailand's climate change initiatives focus more on adaptation than mitigation, as it is not a major greenhouse gas emitter. The looming costs to the U.S. are potentially significant from the water aspects of climate change in Thailand and the Mekong region: national destabilization, increased natural disasters, reduced exports from agriculture (Thailand is the world's greatest rice exporter) and an increase in invasive species.

Thailand is an emerging regional water expert and donor country in its own right. It will host the Mekong River Commission's next meeting, in which climate change will be a focus, during the summer, which would be an ideal time for an ESF to interact with other scientists. USAID has a large regional water and climate change program, and interaction with an ESF fellow would be helpful to both.

¶3. Administrative support: Post commits to provide housing, office support, and in-country travel arrangements. The fellow would be housed in Embassy housing pool furnished quarters, using one of the many gap units during summer transfer season. If Fellow could not come in summer of 2009, then Post requests the fellow for summer of ¶2010.

¶4. RSO concurrence: RSO has cleared on this cable but Bangkok is not

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an unaccompanied tour post.

¶5. State Department point of contact: ESTH officer Howell (Hal) Howard (ETD 9/2011): howardhh@state.gov; office 66 2 205-4712; fax 66 2 254. Alternate contact: ESTH assistant Selma Garrido, garridos@sate.gov.

JOHN